

Subcommittee as well as Chairman LEWIS of the full Committee for their hard work and dedication to our Nation's service members and veterans. Working with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the conference report accompanying H.R. 2361, the fiscal year 2006 appropriations act for the Department of Interior, addresses the urgent need in VA with an additional \$1.5 billion allocated to the Veterans Health Administration. These funds are especially critical for VA to treat new veterans, those returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans.

Year after year, the annual budget for the Veterans Health Administration is the subject of great debate. On February 16, 2005, VA Secretary Nicholson and other VA officials stood before the VA Committee and justified the Administration's budget request. Subsequently, we learned that all the hard work and tough choices Congress has made to increase VA health care funding—by no less than 42 percent in just the last four years—has now been overshadowed by a "discovery" of inadequate funding. Since then, the VA Committee has held three separate hearings over the past month and a half to understand and examine VA's methodologies for forecasting health care costs and utilization projections, to identify the breakdown in the budget process, and to bring to light the serious flaws in VA's usage assumptions.

Equally important, the conference report demands new levels of accountability inside VA. In fact, the VA Committee is seeking to institutionalize accountability in the budget process at VA to ensure that similar circumstances can be averted in the future. There is but one constant we can all agree upon: the VA must ensure a continuity of care for our severely disabled veterans.

While \$1.5 billion seems to be the right figure at this point in time, there are only two months left in the fiscal year. This means that the Department of Veterans Affairs has the ability to roll over into fiscal year 2006 whatever sums remain unspent in fiscal year 2005; I expect department officials to spend wisely. With this particular provision, we are not only seeking to meet the urgent needs for the remainder of this year, but are providing a significant down payment on the shortfall we anticipate in fiscal year 2006.

Mr. Speaker, again, I applaud the work of Chairman LEWIS and Chairman TAYLOR of the Appropriations Committee, as well as the leadership of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees.

IN HONOR OF JAMES FLANNERY

**HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 26, 2005*

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor and recognition of James Flannery, a statesman dedicated to his family, his church, his community and his country. Named Cleveland's "Man of the Year" in 1981, his life of service continued for more than two decades and will be carried on by the friends and family whose lives he touched through his generosity and enthusiasm.

While he was always ready for a game of basketball or football, Jim was more of a math

wiz than an athlete. He earned his degree in accounting at the University of Notre Dame before turning to politics and serving Ohio's 48th district as a State Representative from 1967 to 1972. But his service did not end there. He served on the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Accountancy Board before becoming the Chairman of the City of Lakewood Financial Review Commission and the Charter Review Commission. Jim also served as a member of the Board of Revision for the Cuyahoga County Treasurer's Office and was the founding president of both the University of Notre Dame National Alumni Board and the St. James Parent Teacher Union.

As those closest to him know, even with his extensive community involvement, Jim's family was his true calling and passion, and was always a huge source of pride—and with good reason. His extensive family (33 grandchildren) known by many as "The Flan Clan," has had quite an effect on their community. Almost a dozen of his family members have followed his footsteps at St. Edward's High School to receive a Holy Cross education, and the family's local political involvement goes back three generations.

Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, please join me in honor and recognition of James Flannery and the family he leaves behind, for their outstanding service to their community. Jim's life of service will be remembered and he will be greatly missed by the many people whose lives were blessed by his presence.

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE TEACHER TRAINING EXPANSION ACT OF 2005

**HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 26, 2005*

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, currently, too many of our nation's "special needs" children are underserved due to inadequate training of general education teachers. It was recently reported that approximately 80 percent of students with learning disabilities receive the majority of their instruction in general education classrooms. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 50 percent of disabled students between the ages of 6 and 11, and 30 percent of disabled students between the ages of 11 and 12, are taught in regular classrooms.

These figures reflect the mandate under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities . . . are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. IDEA 612(a)(5)(A).

As more children with disabilities enter general education classrooms, it is critical that general education teachers and personnel are adequately trained to adapt curricula to suit their needs. Regular education teachers and personnel must be equipped to collaborate with special education teachers to ensure that the best individualized approaches are utilized for the successful integration of disabled students into the classroom.

For these reasons, I am reintroducing the Teacher Training Expansion Act of 2005, legislation that would address this crucial area of teacher development. Specifically, this legislation would authorize the Secretary of Education to give preference, in the distribution of certain grants under IDEA, to local educational agencies and certain public or private nonprofit organizations that provide training to regular education personnel to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Under current law, institutions of higher education are already granted such a preferential status in the distribution of these grants. However, I firmly believe local educational agencies and public or private nonprofit organizations that are at the forefront of training teachers who work with disabled students, must be eligible to receive equal consideration in provide this vital type of professional development and training.

Mr. Speaker, by supporting this legislation we will help our teachers gain the skills they need to work effectively with disabled students in general education classrooms and help make good on our promise to provide a quality education to all students.

Lastly, as we celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act today, let us be ever mindful to continue to level the playing field for our disabled and special needs communities in any way that we can. This bill would help in furthering this goal and I urge my colleagues to cosponsor the Teacher Training Expansion Act of 2005.

#### FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

**HON. JAMES P. MORAN**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 26, 2005*

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, today marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Signed into law by George H. W. Bush on July 26th in 1990, and enacted with bipartisan support in the Congress, the ADA served as the world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities.

Following in the footsteps of civil rights legislation from the 1960s, this landmark legislation has sought to end discrimination against people with disabilities in the workplace and encourage full integration into American society, particularly through enabling independent living.

In its fifteen years of existence, the ADA has accomplished much. Access ramps, curb cuts, Braille signs, and assistive listening devices at movie theaters now appear in communities around the country. Transit and communications systems have become more accessible. Indeed, the ADA has contributed to a greater awareness among Americans as to the needs and potential of people with disabilities.

Yet despite this progress, I remain deeply concerned that the promise of the ADA has not been fulfilled for many of America's 54 million citizens with disabilities. For example, empirical evidence demonstrates that there has been little change in the employment rate of people with disabilities. Only 32 percent of